

# Conclusion

EPA New England accomplishments in urban areas prior to the UEI pilot program were few and far between and mainly focused on low-funded efforts through the environmental justice and lead programs. Having the resources to focus an intensive five-year effort at the local level in three targeted cities has demonstrated that the UEI improved the quality of the environment and public health by establishing sustainable environmental infrastructure at the community level in its target cities. It also demonstrated that EPA can and must work with urban communities to continue to improve the environment and public health. UEI staff learned some of the realities of working for cultural change within an organization and are all the richer for embracing the lessons learned by implementing a process that genuinely sought to empower and enable residents who live in inner cities.

The UEI pilot program benefitted from key internal leadership and achieved considerable success working in true partnership with urban community stakeholders with a comparatively modest investment of financial resources and staff time. From 1995-2000 the UEI pilot program awarded and managed a total of 111 grants valued at \$3,357,197 in the neighborhoods of Greater Boston, Providence, and Hartford. By comparison, the total budget for EPA New England in FY2000 alone was \$54,676,604 with \$7,070,934 dedicated to the regional Brownfields Program. The annual operating budgets in 2001 for UEI target cities are \$1.7 billion for Boston, \$447.33 million for Providence, and \$422.66 million for Hartford. EPA New England's effort to clean up the Boston Harbor in Massachusetts took ten years and cost over \$4 billion.

As we look toward the future, the UEI pilot program will include a greater emphasis on the principles of Smart Growth. Over the past few years it became apparent that the Smart Growth Initiative was working to facilitate more strategic growth patterns in suburban and rural areas. Urban communities and their issues were not a prominent part of their action plan nor was regional planning

efforts a prominent part of the UEI strategy even though both initiatives support sustainability. It was natural for both efforts to work more closely together. Both programs have started to support working in partnership to insure that as solutions for environmental problems are considered, the maximum benefit with the least externalities for everyone will be evaluated before actions are taken. The UEI and Smart Growth are merely at the precipice of what could prove to be a very powerful discussion between unlikely urban, suburban and rural partners. Again, the UEI and Smart Growth are working with like minded academic institutions and private entities as well as community partners. A region with a common vision that provides economic growth and opportunities as well as environmental protection for everyone is definitely a rainbow worth chasing and a risk worth taking.

The UEI's efforts and investment to benefit communities have gone far beyond external accomplishments. In fact, over the past five years there has been a considerable shift in the acceptance and legitimacy of working in urban areas in EPA New England. The combined efforts of the Environmental Justice movement, formalization of the Brownfields Redevelopment

program, and the work of the UEI have made it standard operating procedure to invest and work in urban cities. Today, EPA New England has placed a greater emphasis across departments, programs and offices to dedicate resources to serve urban communities. This is a distinct change in operating procedure and sets the stage for being able to service more urban communities in the future and making sure that the resources dedicated to projects are effective, efficient and service the greatest environmental needs of urban residents. However, the lasting proof of the success of the pilot is the sustainable infrastructure of organizations which will continue to grow and network with an ability to improve their environment and quality of life while maintaining support through a public and private resolve to redistribute resources in a just and inclusive manner. EPA has only scratched the surface of what needs to be accomplished to provide the quality of environment and public health deserved by urban residents in every city in America. The UEI demonstrates that a community-based approach that builds an environmental infrastructure and increases local capacity to creatively solve problems will cost-effectively produce meaningful and measurable results.

There are three broad conclusions drawn from the UEI pilot program that are applicable nationwide:

- Developing a sustainable environmental infrastructure that redefines roles, responsibilities and measuring success is critical to solve urban environmental and public health problems. At a minimum, government at all levels must: insure that urban residents maintain a prominent role in the decisions and protection of their health and environment; create a level playing field with mutual benefits for urban residents and local business and an understanding that both must work together to achieve results; and measure success by including short term results and the future exponential results of current activities. Programs that do less will underestimate the potential benefit and/or damage that current actions have on the future.
- New regulatory and non-regulatory approaches must be coupled with an annual commitment of dedicated resources to meaningfully redress urban environmental problems. It takes a significant investment of time and resources to halt degradation no less reverse environmental trends in a sustainable manner. These creative approaches must be dynamic and develop an iterative process that involves many stakeholders including academic and health professionals.
- EPA must develop a creative and holistic strategy grounded in the principles of environmental justice and smart growth to create safe and healthy urban communities for future generations across America. Cumulative risk is a result of the panoply of pollution sources that represent vast residual risks uncontrolled by current environmental regulations. Environmental injustice is manifested through cumulative risk, compounded by social and economic inequities and unsustainable growth practices.



*UEI staff and community volunteers celebrate after distributing 10,000 copies of the “Do’s and Don’ts for the Woonasquatucket River” to urban residents in Rhode Island.*

# Glossary

**Brownfields** Abandoned, idled, or underused industrial or commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination.

**Capacity Building** Increasing the ability of a community, group, or organization to organize, access resources, and address community problems.

**Community Based Environmental Protection (CBEP)** A holistic and collaborative approach to environmental protection that brings together public and private stakeholders within a place or community to identify environmental and public health concerns, set priorities, and forge comprehensive solutions. Through CBEP, which is often called a place-based or ecosystem approach, stakeholders consider environmental protection along with human social needs, work toward achieving long-term ecosystem health, and foster linkages between economic prosperity and environmental well-being.

**Community Gardens** Vegetable and ornamental gardens established for safe food production, neighborhood beautification, and economic development and to promote neighborhood building and cohesion.

**Environmental Monitoring for Public Access and Community Tracking (EMPACT)** A new approach to working with communities to collect, manage, and present environmental information to the public. It aims to work with communities to make timely, accurate, and understandable environmental information available to millions of people in the largest metropolitan areas across the country so that communities and individuals can make informed, day-to-day decisions about their lives.

**Environmental Justice** The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies.

**Government Results Performance Act of 1993 (GPRA)** The purposes of this Act are to (1) improve the confidence of the American people in the capability of the Federal Government, by systematically holding Federal agencies accountable for achieving program results; (2) initiate program performance reform with a series of pilot projects in setting program goals, measuring program performance against those goals, and reporting publicly on their progress; (3) improve Federal program effectiveness and public accountability by promoting a new focus on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction; (4) help Federal managers improve service delivery, by requiring that they plan for meeting program objectives and by providing them with information about program results and service quality; (5) improve congressional decision-making by providing more objective information on achieving statutory objectives, and on the relative effectiveness and efficiency of Federal programs and spending; and (6) improve internal management of the Federal Government.

**Geographic Information System (GIS)** Software and hardware systems that relate and display collected data in terms of geographic, or spatial, location.

**Healthy Housing** Part of the EPA New England Children First campaign, aimed at creating healthier environments in the places children spend most of their time—at home, in schools and outdoors. Healthy Housing focuses on issues such as lead poisoning, asthma, tap water, environmental tobacco smoke, radon, and household hazardous waste.

**Indoor Air Quality** Air quality inside buildings including homes, schools, and office buildings. Since 90 percent of our time is spent indoors, indoor space is an important part of environmental health.

**Integrated Pest Management** The coordinated use of pest and environmental information with available pest control methods to prevent unacceptable levels of pest damage by the most economical means and with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment.

**Livable Communities** A comprehensive and holistic approach towards healthy neighborhoods that strives to foster green space, good air quality, safe streets, and a strong local economy.

**Open/Green Space** A portion of a development site that is permanently set aside for public or private use and will not be development. Open space may be used as community open space or preserved as green space (in a natural, undisturbed, or revegetated condition).

**Pollution Prevention** An organized, comprehensive effort to systematically reduce or eliminate pollutants or contaminants prior to their generation or their release or discharge into the environment.

**Sprawl or Urban Sprawl** The movement of businesses and industry from urban to suburban areas with the effect of reducing employment and economic opportunities in the urban center and increasing traffic flow and environmental impacts to suburban areas.

**Stakeholders** A variety of individuals, organizations, and agencies interested in a particular place or issue. Stakeholders may include individual residents and landowners, civic and religious organizations, businesses and industry associations, environmental and conservation groups, and governmental agencies at all levels.

**Sustainable Development** Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development); a concern for sustainable development counsels long-term time horizons consistent with our responsibilities to others, recognition of the interdependence of the economy and the environment, and more comprehensive, integrated approaches to economic development and environmental protection (EPA, 1993).

**Urban Environmental Initiative (UEI)** A multi-media, place-based pilot program in EPA New England started in 1995 to address urban environment and public health issues in the targeted cities of Boston, MA; Providence, RI; and Hartford, CT.

**Vacant Lots** A neglected parcel of property in a residential area. In many cases, houses were built on these lots, but fell into disrepair and were subsequently demolished, leaving behind a legacy of contamination and a haven for illegal dumping of wastes and rats.

# Credits

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*UEI and EPA staff celebrate after conducting soil sampling for heavy metals on vacant lots in Providence, RI.*

# UEI Community Partners in Connecticut

Building Parent Power  
Christian Activities Council  
Citizen's Research Education Network  
City of Hartford  
Clay Arsenal Neighborhood Revitalization Zone  
Clay Hill Block Association  
Connecticut Audubon Society  
Connecticut Bicycle Collaborative  
Connecticut Children's Medical Center  
Connecticut Citizen's Research Group  
Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection  
Connecticut Department of Public Health  
Connecticut Environmental Justice Coalition  
Connecticut Indoor Environments Resource Team  
Connecticut River Watershed Council  
Connecticut Voices for Children, Inc.  
Eastern Connecticut Resource and Conservation Development Area  
Hartford Area Rally Together  
Hartford Enterprise Zone Business Association  
Hartford Environmental Justice Network  
Hartford Growth Council  
Hartford Health Department  
Hartford Hospital  
Hispanic Health Council  
Knox Parks Foundation  
North Eastern Block Association  
North End Block Association  
ONE/CHANE  
Pliny Block Association  
Ragin' Cajun  
Riverfront Recapture  
South Arsenal Neighborhood Development Corporation  
Southside Institutional Neighborhood Association  
St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center  
UConn's Environmental Division  
UConn Environmental Research Institute  
University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Services  
Upper Albany Merchants Association  
Upper Albany Neighborhood Collaborative  
USDA CT Office  
US HUD CT Office



*Residents and youth work together planting trees and flowers to increase greenspace in Hartford, CT.*

# UEI Community Partners in Rhode Island

Allen AME Church  
AMEN Inc.  
Americorps  
Audubon Society of Rhode Island  
Brown University, Center for Environmental Studies  
Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy  
Childhood Lead Action Project  
Citizens Bank  
City of North Providence, Mayor's Office  
City of Providence, Office of Neighborhood  
Environmental Affairs  
City Year  
Clean Water Action  
Direct Action for Rights and Equality  
Dunkin' Donuts  
Environmental Diversity Education Forum  
Friends of the Moshassuck  
Greater Elmwood Neighborhood Services  
Groundwork Providence  
Grow Smart Rhode Island  
Hasbro Children's Hospital  
HELP Lead Safe Center  
Keep Providence Beautiful  
Northern Rhode Island Conservation  
District  
Olneyville Housing Corporation  
Olneyville Merchants Association  
Paddle Providence  
Progreso Latino  
Providence Dept. of Planning  
Providence Environmental Court  
Providence Environmental Strike Team  
Providence Foundation  
Providence Housing Authority  
Providence Neighborhood Housing  
Corporation  
Rhode Island Department of  
Environmental Management

Rhode Island Department of Health  
Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance  
Corporation  
Rhode Island School of Design  
Roger Williams Park Zoo  
Save the Bay  
Smart Growth  
South Providence Development Corporation  
Southeast Asian Development Corporation  
Southside Community Land Trust  
The Providence Plan  
United Way  
University of Rhode Island  
Urban League of Rhode Island  
VNA of CARE New England  
West End Renewal Fund  
Woonasquatucket River Greenway Project  
Youth in Action



*A resident volunteer distributes information door to door to urban residents in Providence, RI.*

# UEI Community Partners in Massachusetts

Alliance for Boston Neighborhoods  
Alternatives for Community and Environment  
Appalachian Mountain Club  
Boston College  
Boston Harbor Watershed Team  
Boston University, School of Public Health  
Bowdoin Street Health Centers  
BSC Group  
Chelsea Community Connection Coalition  
Chelsea Creek Action Group  
Chelsea Green Space and Recreation Committee  
Chelsea Human Service Collaborative  
Chinese Progressive Association  
City of Boston, Dept. of Neighborhood Development  
City of Boston, Environmental Services Department  
City of Boston, Office of Sustainable Boston  
City Life/Urban Vida  
City Year  
Coalition to Protect Chinatown  
Codman Square Health Center  
Committee for Boston Public Housing  
Conservation Law Foundation  
Dimock Health Center  
Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative  
Eagle Eye Institute  
Earthworks Project  
East Boston Ecumenical Community Committee  
East Boston Recreation, Master Planning, Advisory Council  
Environmental Diversity Forum  
Environmental League of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs  
Freedom House, Inc.  
Garden Futures  
Greater Boston Environmental Justice Network  
Greater Boston Urban Resources Partnership  
Greenleaf Composting  
Massachusetts Bays Program  
Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety  
Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Program  
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management - Forest Service  
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection  
Massachusetts Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Environmental Law Enforcement Riverways Programs  
Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture  
Massachusetts Department of Public Health  
Massachusetts Environmental Collaborative  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Urban Planning  
Massachusetts Public Health Association  
Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
Mystic River Watershed Association  
National Center for Lead Safe Housing  
Neighborhood of Affordable Housing  
Neighborhoods Against Urban Pollution  
New England Lead Coordinating Committee  
Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM)  
Reaching Out to Chelsea Adolescents (ROCA)  
Re-Vision House  
Roxbury Community College, Center for Environmental Education  
Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Program  
Save the Harbor/Save the Bay  
Second Nature  
Smart Growth  
South Boston Health Center  
STRIVE  
Suffolk County Conservation District  
Tellus Institute  
The Food Project  
Toxic Action Center  
Tufts University  
University of Boston, Urban Harbors Institute  
Urban Resource Partnership  
Urban Revival, Inc.  
US Department of Agriculture  
US Department of Health and Human Services  
US Department of Housing and Urban Development  
The Watershed Institute



*A City Year youth collects soil samples in Boston, MA.*





United States Environmental Protection Agency  
New England